

## QUESTIONS PEOPLE ASK US.

### 2) WHY DO YOU HAVE NO MINISTER OR PASTOR?

In most denominations, someone is appointed by each congregation as a full time preacher, a person who has almost exclusive access to the pulpit, and who receives an agreed salary or stipend for services rendered. The title of the individual differs from denomination to denomination. The believers who gather at the Perth Gospel Hall have no such arrangement, and perhaps you wonder why.

The basic reason is that we have the conviction that as far as church practice is concerned, the New Testament is our only guide, and we cannot find any precedent for a clerical system in the Scriptures. Let me explain what we do find in the Bible.

- 1) New Testament churches were guided by elders, sometimes called overseers (translated *bishops* in the KJV). There was always a number of these men in each congregation: see Acts 20.17, Phil.1.1, 1Peter 5.1. They are also called *pastors* (Eph.4.11), that term being a translation of the very ordinary word *shepherd* and indicating their responsibility to care for the flock. (See Acts 20.28 and 1Peter 5.2 where the word *feed* means *to shepherd*, i.e. to cater for spiritual needs as a shepherd would attend to his flock). In New Testament times, that responsibility did not rest with one man: a number shared the burden.
- 2) New Testament churches were instructed by a *variety* of preachers and teachers. For example, in the church at Antioch five men had responsibility for the task (Acts 13.1). Two of these men were called by God to serve Him elsewhere, but when they returned to Antioch, **many others** were involved with them in *teaching and preaching the word of the Lord* (Acts 15.35). Clearly, some men have been gifted by God to preach the Gospel, or to exhort the Christians, or to teach the Word of God. There should be opportunity for all who are so gifted to exercise their gift for the good of the whole company. Spiritual gift is as varied as the members of the human body (1Cor. 12), and so every assembly member has a part to play and must have scope to function. One man monopolising the preaching excludes and stifles the gifts of others.
- 3) New Testament churches had no payroll. It is true that in these early days there were men who served the Lord in a full time way, but their ministry seemed to be more of a pioneering or itinerant nature. There is never a hint that any contract was settled with them, or that they had the assurance of an agreed income. They were dependent on the Lord to supply their material needs, and He did so through His people as they gave them unsolicited gifts.

- They never took money from unsaved people (3John v7).
- They were supported by various assemblies (Philippians 4.15-19) and individual believers (Galatians 6.6.)
- They had the right to expect material support from their fellow-believers but on occasions would be willing to forego it (1Cor.9).

These Scriptural principles which governed the support of evangelists and Bible teachers should still be in place today.

**CONCLUSION.** In Scripture we cannot find the equivalent of the college training, the salary, or the vestments of the modern clergyman, and so we just try to maintain the simplicity of the New Testament pattern by disregarding these things and allowing various gifted brothers to preach the Gospel and teach the Word of God. Some of these are local: some are invited from elsewhere, the Scriptural precedent for this being found in Acts 11.25-26 where Barnabas brought Paul to Antioch to give help in the teaching there. Be like the Bereans in Acts 17.11 who *"searched the Scriptures daily whether these things were true."*